

Kids who play "Minecraft" like to read books based on the video game too

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Jonny Rice wears a "Minecraft"-themed mask while promoting a video clip he created during the Electronic Entertainment Expo in Los Angeles, June 13, 2013. Photo: AP Photo/Jae C. Hong

NEW YORK — Like many kids, 7-year-old Tyler Sacharow is crazy about video games. Sometimes, though, Tyler puts down the games and picks up a book instead. Seeing that makes his dad Aaron happy.

Aaron doesn't even mind if the book is a guide to the video game "Minecraft."

"I don't want to say it tricks them into reading," says Aaron. "But there are books kids are reading for schools and books that they hopefully like in their free time. And if 'Minecraft' books are a motivation to read, that's a good thing, right?"

The game "Minecraft" was originally released in 2011 and has sold more than 50 million copies. Since last November, the "Minecraft" guides have become one of the most successful book series. There are now three guides: "Minecraft:

Essential Handbook," "Minecraft: Redstone Handbook" and "Minecraft: Construction Handbook." Together, the guides — also known as manuals — have sold more than 6 million copies.

Hearing From Kids

Scholastic is the company that releases the guides. It plans to put out a new guide, "Minecraft: Combat Handbook," in September.

"We first heard from kids themselves about 'Minecraft,'" said Debra Dorfman, a vice president at Scholastic. "We started watching a lot of YouTube videos to see what the buzz was about. Kids, parents and teachers were all saying 'Minecraft' was good for you."

Dorfman said teachers were talking about how "Minecraft" helps kids learn about science, math and solving problems. Parents were letting kids play for hours at a time.

Kira Porton runs a kids bookstore. She says the guides could become as popular as series like "The Diary of a Wimpy Kid" and "Percy Jackson." At first Porton ordered just a few copies of the guides for her store. She soon found herself asking for more.

"These books just fly off the shelf," she said.

Books About Other Games

"Minecraft" is set in a world where everything is made out of blocks, like Legos. Players are able to mine materials from the land, like dirt, stone, metals, water and tree trunks. They use the materials to build things like buildings, tools and armor. Their goal is to protect themselves from different monsters.

Amazon.com book editor Chris Schluep says that other game-related books have succeeded as well. Last year, "The Legend of Zelda: Hyrule Historia" was a best seller. Books about the games "Halo" and "World of Warcraft" have also sold very well.

Fans want to know more about their favorite games, Schluep says. Many end up turning to books.

Elizabeth H. Madarang teaches second grade at a school in Pennsylvania. She learned of the "Minecraft" games because her students kept mentioning them in their weekly writing reports. Earlier this year, she ordered the first "Minecraft" guide. Her students have now formed a book club.

"I definitely see 'Minecraft' manuals encouraging students to read," Madarang says.

Quiz

- 1 How many copies of the video game "Minecraft" have been sold since it came out in 2011?
 - (A) more than 50 million
 - (B) more than 6 million
 - (C) less than 50 million
 - (D) less than 6 million

- 2 Parents and teachers want children to play "Minecraft" for all the following reasons EXCEPT:
 - (A) They say that "Minecraft" is good for you.
 - (B) Teachers believe it helps kids learn about science, math and problem solving.
 - (C) The video game manuals about "Minecraft" are encouraging children to read.
 - (D) It is one of the most popular video games.

- 3 Select the sentence that is the LEAST important to the main idea of the article.
 - (A) "Minecraft" is a very popular video game that has sold millions of copies since its release in 2011.
 - (B) Many teachers believe that "Minecraft" teaches children about science, math and problem solving.
 - (C) More than 6 million copies of "Minecraft" guides, known as manuals, have been sold.
 - (D) Some second-grade students have formed a book club about "Minecraft."

- 4 In the section "Hearing from Kids" select the paragraph that BEST explains why Scholastic started publishing video guides for "Minecraft."

Answer Key

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Paragraph 5:

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